

## Ending TB-related stigma and discrimination

THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION reported that 1.9 million people died with tuberculosis (TB) in 2015.<sup>1</sup> Each of these deaths is a tragedy in itself, as TB is a preventable and curable disease. There is, however, another tragedy which goes grossly unreported as it is not systematically measured: too many of those who die from or survive TB are ejected from their households, spurned by their loved ones, and/or lose their jobs, just to mention the most common social consequences of being diagnosed with TB. Furthermore, an estimated 4 million people annually miss accessing TB care; TB stigma is likely to be one of the reasons behind this.

Further understanding the nature of TB stigma and measuring its magnitude are essential steps towards mounting a proper response to the problem. Reducing TB stigma is essential because it hinders care seeking,<sup>2–4</sup> contact tracing, outbreak investigations,<sup>5–8</sup> treatment initiation,<sup>9</sup> adherence<sup>10</sup> and quality of care. Moreover it degrades social capital,<sup>11–13</sup> may contribute to catastrophic costs,<sup>14</sup> and deprives people with TB of their rights and the respect of others.<sup>15,16</sup>

This supplement presents the state of the art in TB stigma. Rood et al. show that TB stigma thrives in settings where criminalisation laws and policies contribute to high rates of incarceration.<sup>2</sup> Zwering et al. propose a new approach to take stigmatisation into the cost-effectiveness equation. Sommerland et al., confirm that effective interventions to reduce TB stigma are few, and innovations are needed,<sup>17</sup> while Straetemans et al. hint that training health care workers may make them better allies.<sup>18</sup> Finally, Macintyre et al. outline the TB stigma research gaps and how to fill them.<sup>19</sup>

The global TB community must acknowledge TB stigma and act on it effectively as a matter of urgency, in alignment with the WHO's End TB Strategy, which has zero TB suffering in its vision,<sup>20</sup> and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda of ending TB.<sup>21</sup> The Stop TB Partnership's Global Plan to End TB calls for a paradigm shift, prioritising vulnerable and underserved populations.<sup>22</sup> Global TB stakeholders must go beyond medical interventions to fully address the suffering of TB-affected communities, taking bold, concerted actions towards a people- and patient-centred approach.<sup>23</sup> This special supplement contributes to filling the current knowledge gap on TB stigma and informs further, urgently needed research and policy measures.

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